Conservator, and he reports that, at the last annual conference of Forest Officers held at Quilon, a programme for the judicious outlay of money in clearing obstructions along water-ways and opening fresh communications was decided upon. The allotment for the construction of roads and bridges and the blasting of rocks in the beds of rivers has been appreciably increased in the budget for the current year. With a view to expand the area of sandalwood plantations in the State, steps are in progress for reserving a large extent of lands in the Pambar valley and along the northern outlet road from the 21st to the 34th mile-stone, while acquisition proceedings have been completed in respect of the lands required for the extension of the existing sandalwood reserve at Marayur. When the necessary preliminary steps are over and the lands referred to are handed over to the department, a steady programme for the expansion of sandalwood plantations will be taken in hand and carried out. I have already adverted to the measures adopted for excluding from reserved forests swampy and other areas fit for paddy cultivation. Orders have also been issued for the lists of the existing cattle *porambokes* being carefully scrutinised, with a view to reserving only such of them as are really useful for grazing purposes and to throwing open the rest for cultivation. Repeated representations have, as you know, been made in this Assembly as regards the inconvenience experienced by the public in the matter of obtaining free passes from the Forest Department for the removal of timber from registered holdings, and with the object of removing or at least minimising this inconvenience, a set of Rules have been framed by the Conservator and scrutinised by the Additional Head Sirkar Vakil, and they are now being examined by a mixed committee of officials and non-official members of the Legislative Council. The report submitted by the Forest Utilisation Officer on the possibility of manufacturing paper pulp from reeds in North Travancore is still under the consideration of the Government. The success of the scheme is dependent largely on the cheapness of the power to be used. In the meantime, certain proposals for the utilisation of these reeds for the manufacture of matches and match-boxes received from Mr. Cox of Cochin are being examined by the Economic Development Board. In regard to the Forest College at Quilon, the original idea was to train two batches of students; but it has since been found that the trained staff already employed, together with the first batch of thirteen students now undergoing training, would be sufficient to meet the present requirements of the department, and that the College may therefore be closed early in 1099. Meanwhile this institution is being also utilised to give a shorter course of practical training for one year to a few Deputy Rangers and Foresters of the department.

33. Excise.—The system of abkari administration underwent no change in 1097, except for the reduction of the issue strength of country spirits from 20° and 30° U. P. to 25° and 35° U. P. respectively, with the avowed object of discouraging the drink habit. With the new abkari contracts for the biennial period of 1098-99, a further enhancement of tree-tax and of the excise duty on toddy arrack has been effected, the number of arrack and toddy shops has been further reduced, and an earlier closing hour has been prescribed, in furtherance of the same object. The outstanding feature of the year 1097 is a large fall of about Rs. 4 lakhs in the abkari revenue, inclusive of opium and ganja. As I have stated more than once elsewhere, it is not the desire of the State to make revenue out of drink to the detriment of the welfare of its subjects, and nobody would be more pleased than the Government if this fall in revenue was a true index of the growth of temperance.

34. Salt.—The improvement works started in 1096 for the Tamaracolam old salt factory were completed in 1097, while those in respect of the *alloms* at Rajakkamangalam and Colachel are still in progress. The defunct Variyur *allom* has been resuscitated, and the Trivandrum Port Salt depôt has been reopened with a view to meet the convenience of the public. In the cyclone of Vrischikam last, the salt factories at Tamaracolam suffered serious loss, about 3 lakhs of maunds of salt stored on the different platforms being washed away by the floods.

35. Public Works.—The bulk of the expenditure of the Public Works Department in 1097 was on communications, especially in the northern taluks of the State. The Rules regulating the construction of roads by private agencies and their assumption

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly